



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

January 18, 2007

For immediate release

- 1. Public asked for ideas to improve Iowa River**
- 2. Meeting for watershed planners to introduce new Watershed Development and Assistance Grant Program**

PUBLIC ASKED FOR IDEAS TO IMPROVE IOWA RIVER

MEDIA CONTACT: Chris Van Gorp at (515) 281-4791.

IOWA CITY – The DNR will hold a public meeting Jan. 31 in Iowa City to gather Iowans' input on a draft plan to clean up the Iowa River.

The DNR will hold the meeting at 1 p.m. at the Iowa City Water Facility, located at 2551 N. Dubuque St.

The Iowa River is considered “impaired” along a segment stretching from the Coralville dam to the Burlington Street dam in Iowa City. High bacteria levels are the main cause of water quality problems in this segment. The bacteria indicate that waste from wildlife, livestock, birds and humans is in the water.

Only small amounts of bacteria in the impaired segment come from the Coralville Reservoir upstream. Instead, the bacteria drain into the impaired segment of the river from a 153-square-mile watershed. A watershed is an area of land that drains into a stream, river or lake. This watershed drainage, which is located in Iowa and Johnson counties, comes from Rapid, Muddy and Clear Creeks as well as some areas and storm sewers that drain directly into the Iowa River. It's necessary to improve water quality in this smaller watershed as well as the greater Iowa River watershed to maintain clean water along the impaired segment of the river.

To address this, the DNR has developed a draft water quality improvement plan, also known as a TMDL, or Total Maximum Daily Load, for the Iowa River. TMDLs are calculations used to determine how much of a pollutant a water body can receive and still meet water quality standards. The water quality improvement plan includes information on how conservation efforts in the watershed can improve water quality.

Iowans can also submit comments on the draft Iowa River plan via e-mail, phone or mail (contact information below). Public comments will be accepted until Feb. 19.

Copies of the draft plan are available from the following sources, which can also be used to submit comments:

Internet: www.iowadnr.gov/water/watershed/tmdl/publicnotice.html

E-mail: Chris.Vangorp@dnr.state.ia.us

Telephone: Chris Van Gorp at (515) 281-4791

Mail: Chris Van Gorp, care of Iowa DNR, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, Iowa 50319

More information about water quality improvement plans is available on the DNR Web site at www.iowadnr.gov/water/watershed/tmdl/

After receiving public comments, the DNR will forward the draft plan to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for final approval.

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MEETING FOR WATERSHED PLANNERS TO INTRODUCE NEW WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT AND ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM

MEDIA CONTACT: Bill Ehm at (515) 281-4701 or Allen Bonini at (515) 281-5107

WEST DES MOINES — A Jan. 30 meeting will introduce a new planning assistance program for watershed projects.

The new Watershed Development and Assistance Grants program is designed to assist soil and water conservation districts and local watershed sponsors in assessing and analyzing current watershed conditions, developing and selecting pollutant control alternatives, and writing a watershed plan and watershed project application.

As part of this program, the DNR and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Division of Soil Conservation (DSC) will provide funding to support qualified watershed planners to perform these planning functions. The ultimate goal is to improve local watershed and water quality project applications. Watershed improvement projects work to improve water quality in Iowa lakes and streams by focusing on watersheds, the area of land that drains into a stream or lake.

DSC, DNR and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will host the Jan. 30 meeting for prospective watershed planners to explain the program and the requirements planners must meet. The meeting will provide information on Iowa's impaired waters list, the nine-step watershed planning protocol, available assessment tools, data interpretation, the role of a watershed planner, and the necessary components of a complete watershed plan. Attendance at this meeting is required to be eligible to serve as a watershed planner under this program.

The meeting will be held at 9 a.m. Jan. 30 at the West Des Moines campus of Des Moines Area Community College, located at 5959 Grand Ave. Individuals interested in performing watershed planning under this program must register by contacting Bill Ehm at (515) 281-4701 or william.ehm@dnr.state.ia.us by Friday, Jan. 26. Walk-ins will not be accepted.

More information about the Watershed Development and Assistance Grants program can be found on the DNR Web site at www.iowadnr.gov/water/watershed/project.html.